



The Changing of the Crowns

There is something magical about the age of 70. The Good Book talks about the age of 70 (three scores and ten). It marks the end and at the same time the beginning of a cycle in the life of a human being. Children are grown, grandchildren are running around, the labor market is but a memory and life's doors are even more ready for closure.

On 31 January 2008 Her Majesty Queen Beatrix, queen of the Kingdom of the Netherlands turned 70. This is

the age at which members of the judiciary and the council of state retire from active service. The Constitution does not stipulate when a monarch must leave the throne. This is a decision that is left to the monarch and the monarch alone. In a modern constitutional monarchy there will be of course some consultation with the prime minister of the day. As the birthday of Her Majesty was being celebrated some speculation went on as to when queen Beatrix will say it is time to hand over the reins of state to someone else.

What does the Constitution and history teach us on the whole process of the changing of the crowns? The reign of queen Beatrix will end at the moment of abdication. This is the moment that publicly is made known that the queen is stepping down. The queen's grandmother and mother, Wilhelmina and Juliana respectively, abdicated by signing an Instrument of Abdication. However, this is not mandated by the Constitution. Prince Willem-Alexander becomes king at the same point in time his mother resigns. This is to avoid a monarch less term.